

*a
hunger
for
more*

Finding
Satisfaction in
Jesus When the
Good Life Doesn't
Fill You

AMY DIMARCANGELO

“In this book, Amy DiMarcangelo sets a lavish table for those of us who perpetually crave more. Her well-crafted content repeatedly points to God, the only one who satisfies our deepest longings. Having tasted what this world offers, are you still hungry? Read and feast.”

Katie Faris, author, *He Will Be Enough: How God Takes You by the Hand Through Your Hardest Days*

“Encouraged, convicted, joyful, humbled, and full of hope. These are the things I experienced as I read *A Hunger for More*. To truly hunger for God and all he is can seem like such an overwhelming journey. But Amy so boldly draws us to the Father and his character, doing so with such beautiful compassion and truth. These words will be great encouragement to anyone who is longing for a hunger for God!”

Lauren Eberspacher, author, *From Blacktop to Dirt Road* and *Midnight Lullabies*

“This is a worship-inducing read. With both deep theology and winsome devotion, Amy lifts our gaze onto our wondrous and good God. *A Hunger for More* is a nourishing feast and a balm for weary readers.”

Jen Oshman, author, *Enough about Me: Find Lasting Joy in the Age of Self*

“Who doesn’t want to be satisfied? But so often, the things—even the good things—that we fill our lives with leave us empty. We crave something better. In *A Hunger for More*, Amy DiMarcangelo spreads a feast for women who have enjoyed plenty but have never had enough. With beautifully crafted sentences and biblical depth, DiMarcangelo serves readers course after course of only the best fare. In these pages, women can savor the richness of God himself. Are you hungry?”

Megan Hill, author, *Praying Together* and *A Place to Belong*; editor, The Gospel Coalition

“*A Hunger for More* invites us to stare down our desires and find our God sufficient to satisfy. Amy DiMarcangelo identifies—with wisdom and humility—the cravings that tempt our hearts, then entices us with the rich offerings found in our God. In each chapter her words serve to turn the diamond of the beauty of his character and promises. I found myself pausing my reading to stop and worship. *A Hunger for More* will confront your empty desires and offer the sweet satisfaction of being filled to all the fullness of God.”

Jamie C. Finn, Executive Director, Foster the Family; author, *Foster the Family: Encouragement, Hope, and Practical Help for the Christian Foster Parent*

A Hunger for More

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*Finding Satisfaction in Jesus When
the Good Life Doesn't Fill You*

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A Hunger for More: Finding Satisfaction in Jesus When the Good Life Doesn't Fill You

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*To Mom and Dad,
thank you for teaching me of the surpassing worth of Christ.
Your hunger for God has profoundly impacted my own.*

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Introduction

I SAT AT THE RESTAURANT TABLE, pulled off my coat, and sighed in relief. I had just spent the afternoon hiking snow-covered trails with my sister and best friend. Even though we'd had such a good day, it left us exhausted and famished. We needed to be replenished—to rest our aching bodies and fill our empty bellies.

Our physical weariness that evening pointed to a universal truth: we are weak, needy, hungry beings. Sometimes we are oblivious to this reality; other times we are overwhelmed by it. Whether we realize it or not, we need to be filled. Caught up in day-to-day struggles, it is easy to forget the grace, hope, comfort, and strength given to us through the gospel. We may believe God's word is true, but in practice we don't always trust it. This disconnect between head and heart leaves us aching, no matter how "good" our lives appear.

I came to saving faith as a child. I don't remember exactly when, but I know I had a genuine awareness of my need for forgiveness and a love for the God who gives it. My story isn't one of rebellion or of going through the motions of religious duty while being spiritually dead inside. Despite temptations toward legalism, my

obedience was predominantly motivated by love. I sinned in self-righteousness toward others but also confessed that failure and recognized my need to repent. I experienced seasons of spiritual dryness but undeniably drank from the well of living waters. There was plenty of sin in my life but no unconfessed skeletons in my closet. The same is true today.

Besides the spiritual blessings that accompany knowing Christ at a young age, my life has been filled with relational and material blessings as well. Raised in a loving Christian home, I have no stories to tell of abuse or neglect. I never endured any childhood trauma, unless you count the death of my guinea pig and the disappointment of being placed on the C team—the worst in the league—after missing soccer tryouts. Though adulthood has brought painful trials, I have experienced far more goodness than hardship. A loving marriage, three beautiful children, and a wonderful church are among the most precious gifts I enjoy. Despite all of this, I often ache for *more*.

I don't know your story. Maybe you're like me, and you grew up in a loving family and have walked with Christ for many years. Maybe your shelves are filled with well-worn books on theology, and you faithfully serve in your local church. Or maybe not. Maybe you've had to overcome serious hardships to finally arrive at a place of stability. Maybe Christianity is new to you, but there still aren't many facets of your life others would consider messy or broken. You've likely experienced a mix of joy and sorrow, success and setbacks—though as a whole, life is good. And yet, like me, you're left longing.

This is one of the challenges of so-called good lives—people like us don't always realize the depth of our need. And then when

pangs of hunger inevitably grab our attention, we are unsure of how to ease them. When we're not used to suffering, we must learn to seek God through lament. When we're confronted with the seriousness of our not-so-scandalous sins, we must learn to repent and rest in God's grace. When we're faced with the reality of our weakness, we must learn to depend on God. Here is the good news: though hunger pangs may be uncomfortable and even painful at times, they remind us to eat.

As a "good Christian woman" who finds herself increasingly hungry, I want to bring you alongside as we feast at the table God has set for us. There, we will find a God so vast that the universe cannot contain his glory (chapter 1), yet so intimate that he loves us as a father, savior, and friend (chapter 2). His grace is enough to cover all of our failures (chapter 3), and his word protects us from error so that we can truly know him (chapter 4). He is a God who not only enables us to repent of sin (chapter 5), but also sustains us in our weakness (chapter 6). As we walk through life in a fallen world, he offers both abundant joy (chapter 7) and enduring comfort (chapter 8). And because he is a communal God, he blesses us with the fellowship of the church (chapter 9) and sends us on a mission to build his kingdom (chapter 10). He is more than enough to fill our greatest needs and satisfy our deepest longings.

As you read the following pages, my prayer for you echoes Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, "that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, *that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*" (Eph. 3:17–19).

Craving Wonder

WE BOARDED THE CABLE CAR alongside a man and his goat. Most nights, the windows would have exposed a mountainous silhouette against a starry sky. Instead, a thick fog lent to the ominous atmosphere of a horror movie as we clanked our way up a cliff toward Gimmelwald, Switzerland—population 130. Unable to see more than a couple of steps ahead of us, we tentatively dragged our suitcases along a dimly lit path until we reached a nearby hostel. Exhausted from a long day of travel (and relieved that we hadn't fallen to our death), we fell right to sleep.

When the sun poured into our room the next morning, we awoke to a stunning view. No longer veiled under the cover of hazy darkness, we were astonished to see the Jungfrau—the highest peak in Europe—perfectly framed within our window. Eager to explore, we rushed through breakfast and questioned our host about the most scenic trails to hike. After laughing at our novice choice of footwear—sneakers instead of hiking boots—he sent us on our way.

The panoramic view was breathtaking from the start. But as the morning mist cleared, allowing us to see further and further into the Alpine mountains, it grew even more stunning. We trekked through twisted and tree-covered trails and came upon clearings that made us halt in wonder. Each time we imagined we'd seen the pinnacle of beauty, we were proven wrong. A new peak would come into view, making the mountain line even more wondrous than before. The vibrantly green grass, blue sky, and snowcapped mountains contrasted so sharply that it almost looked like an overly photoshopped picture. When the afternoon sun danced off the snow, it glimmered like diamonds. Everywhere we turned, we beheld a majestic display of our incomprehensibly wondrous God.

This experience, in many ways, mirrors the wonders of knowing God himself. He is eternally glorious, but apart from the Holy Spirit's work, our hearts are too darkened by sin to see and stand in wonder. Our frail human eyes are blinded to his majesty. Just as my husband and I couldn't grasp the beauty of the Swiss Alps until the sun rose, we cannot grasp the beauty of our Creator until the Holy Spirit illuminates it to us.

And then, in a moment, we *see*. His glory makes us gaze in awe as we walk, for the first time, as children of light. The fog lifts from the morning sky, revealing more of his glory. Though we inevitably traverse dark paths that leave us scraped and scared and worn out, perseverance leads to places where we behold him anew. Just when we think we've got our minds wrapped around him, he shows us more—some peak of beauty we didn't see at first. In him, there is always more to discover.

Our deep soul hunger exists for a reason: we were made to live in wonder.

In this chapter, we will consider how our craving for wonder is meant to draw us to God yet tempts us to seek satisfaction elsewhere. We will also examine three ways to kindle our awe and awaken our worship: enjoying God's creation, remembering God's works, and studying God's attributes.

Distracted from Wonder

God has created us to be filled with wonder, but our lives are often filled with distraction instead. Every year we consume hundreds—if not thousands—of hours of entertainment, binging on cheap amusements instead of curating our selections with a discerning eye for what is lovely and commendable. We mindlessly scroll through social media, lured by clickbait and hot takes, instead of sitting and savoring the sort of good books that help us actually slow down and *think*. We fill our closets and houses with the clutter of insatiable consumerism. Our overcrowded calendars distract us from the rhythms and priorities God designed to cast our eyes upon him and reorient us to his kingdom—too busy with work, sports, and socials, we neglect the Sabbath, fellowship, and serving others.

It's no wonder our hearts grow listless. A. W. Tozer says it well: "Secularism, materialism, and the intrusive presence of things have put out the light in our souls and turned us into a generation of zombies. We cover our deep ignorance with words, but we are ashamed to wonder, we are afraid to whisper 'mystery.'"¹

We cannot walk as zombies and call it life. When we live in ways that dull our faith, the resulting spiritual boredom enhances the appeal of sin. Created to be filled, we hate feeling empty. It's often in an effort to satiate our longings—or at least to numb

them—that we succumb to temptation. We shop in excess to hush our discontented hearts. We entertain lust in our pursuit of pleasure. We chase after accomplishment and recognition in our search for glory. We obsess over our appearance in our quest for beauty. While these pursuits may thrill us at first, they prove futile in the end. Countless wealthy, successful, attractive, respected, famous, intelligent, and hedonistic people can testify to this. We were made to know the living God, and nothing less will satisfy us. When we orient our hearts to behold *him*, he enlivens our dull hearts with wonder. *He* is the source of contentment and pleasure. *He* is the sum of all beauty and glory. When we behold our eternally worthy God, our wonder will never be exhausted.

If my husband and I had just stayed inside and looked through the window, content with only a glimpse of the Swiss Alps instead of going out to explore them, our awe would have waned. Their magnificence wasn't meant to be observed through a 2 x 3-foot piece of glass. In the same way, if we find ourselves uninterested in God, it is because we have stopped exploring. We have limited our view and contented our souls in stuffy rooms rather than stepping out in faith to behold more.

God *delights* to reveal himself to us! He displays his glory in a multitude of ways and invites us to worship with David, “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable” (Ps. 145:3).

The Wonder of Creation

God has manifested his glory to the entire world through his creation (Rom. 1:20). As David sang, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork” (Ps.

19:1). By holding the galaxies in place, he gives us a glimpse of his immense power. Through stars that adorn the night sky and sunsets that paint the horizon, he reveals himself to us. Standing at the summit of a mountain or at the edge of the ocean kindles an awareness of how very small we are. This awareness isn't meant to overcome us with a sense of insignificance, but to fill us with awe of God's magnificence. Our hearts will warm in amazement when we remember that the God who determines the rise and fall of every ocean wave is the God who determines every moment of our days.

As a teenager on a family vacation, I sat outside to spend time in prayer and asked God to show me a shooting star. I wasn't testing him or looking for a sign of his existence; I'd just never seen one and knew he could show me if he wanted to. Over the next half hour he decorated the sky with three! I remember my heart being so moved in wonder—the God in charge of the universe hears *me!* The God who calls every star by name, knows your name too.

It's not just mountain vistas, expansive oceans, and sprawling deserts that display God's majesty. As the artist behind every season, he shows his beauty in flowers and foliage, blue skies and snow-covered fields. He stamps his glory into stones and sand, creeks and waterfalls. He manifests his splendor through iridescent sea creatures, lions roaring across the savanna, blithe mountain goats scaling cliffs, monkeys swinging through rainforests, and eagles soaring the sky. All creatures—great and small, fierce and gentle, cute and creepy—attest to his unmatched creativity. There are approximately 1.2 million known animal species in the world (scientists estimate the actual number is 8.7 million), and God, *our God*, sustains the life of each one.² Every year, new

species are discovered. Some boast such striking colors that they stir our imagination about the indescribable beauty awaiting us in the new heavens and the new earth. Others, like the ridiculous-looking blobfish, make us realize that God loves a good laugh.

Most astounding of all, the God who spoke creation into existence also made *us* and bestowed us with the unparalleled honor of bearing his image (Gen. 1:27). Nothing else in the universe—not even the angels—shares this privilege. Our blemishes, wrinkles, quirks, and failures incline us to think otherwise, but *people* are the pinnacle of God's creation. His magnum opus. As he formed Adam from the dust and knit David in the womb, God meticulously crafts each of our bodies and minds and hearts and souls. We are not clones. Because God is worthy of infinite worship, he intentionally designed our differences so that each of our lives can sing to him in a different key. He has given us the capacity to embody his love, justice, truth, and grace, and sovereignly placed us in specific circumstances to do so. And whether we are teachers or lawyers or mothers or writers or doctors or homemakers or students, he has entrusted *us* with the mandate to exercise dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:28–30).

As God's image bearers, we have also been endowed with creativity. So even man-made marvels ultimately point back to him. Consider the engineering required to build the Pantheon without modern construction equipment, or the genius required to send man to the moon—it's nothing short of astonishing. Add to that a seemingly endless array of creative expression in the world. There is a reason that ornate cathedrals, towering skyscrapers, concert halls, and art museums attract scores of visitors—we are drawn to beauty, intrigued by human ingenuity. Created by an infinitely

creative God, even food bears the mark of our image bearing. Meals that could be bland and uniform are instead prepared in a mouthwatering symphony of flavors and spices and combinations. Such culinary prowess isn't only achieved in Michelin-star restaurants; one of the best meals I've ever had was cooked in the humble kitchen of a Syrian refugee.

God isn't an elitist who shows beauty only to those who can afford an admission ticket. He manifests his glory among every climate, culture, and class, calling all people to come and worship.

We must take the time to explore and marvel at creation. Go on a hike, watch a nature documentary, study botany, eat your favorite meal, explore your city. Seek whatever captures your heart with awe until you echo the praise due your Creator: "Worthy are you, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created" (Rev. 4:11).

The Wonder of His Works

God's marvelous works are meant to incite our awe. This is why he continually instructed the Israelites to remember them. We are called to remember them too. Yet familiarity with the Bible, while vital to the Christian life, brings coinciding challenges. God's mighty deeds fail to move us because we've heard the stories so many times before. Our eyes don't widen the way they did when we first learned of Noah's ark, the parting of the Red Sea, or the tumbling walls of Jericho. Even Jesus's miracles seem like old news.

We must ask God to pierce us through his word and help us marvel at his works. These aren't just stories! They are *real* events, orchestrated by a *real* God, to affect the lives of *real* people. We

know this, but our fickle hearts and distracted minds prevent us from meaningful reflection. In an age when we are conditioned to expect quick results, we must learn to patiently steep in Scripture. The Spirit will be faithful to enliven it to us.

And, oh, what glories there are to behold! What wondrous works our God has done! So faithful was God to Daniel that he shut the mouths of ravenous lions meant to devour him (Dan. 6:21–22). So merciful was he to David that he sent Nathan to pluck him from the destructive path paved by his lust and violence (2 Sam. 12:1–15). So inclined was his ear to the poor that he avenged the injustice of Sodom (Ezek. 16:49–50). And then this mighty God condescended to become a humble man (Phil. 2:6–7). So powerful that he could walk on water and calm a raging storm with a word (Matt. 8:26; 14:25). So compassionate that he healed a despised leper and cast a demon out of a Gentile woman’s daughter (Matt. 8:3; Mark 7:29). So loving that he stretched out his hands to die for his enemies (Rom. 5:8). So victorious that he defeated death itself (1 Cor. 15:55). So worthy that John—during his mysterious foretaste of heaven—recounts, “I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ‘To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!’” (Rev. 5:13).

Not only are God’s marvelous works woven in Scripture; they are evident throughout the history of the church and in our own lives as well. Yet we often fail to recognize them. Even though we intellectually believe in his sovereign control, we functionally separate his hands from our daily lives. We shouldn’t. God is providentially at work in all of our circumstances.

I recently started a master's program in theological studies. A few years ago, I never would have imagined pursuing a graduate degree. Our budget was too tight, my husband's job offered no path for career growth, and I aspired to write books. It was only after a steady stream of rejected book proposals that I began to consider the idea of seminary. If I wanted to serve others through writing, perhaps I needed to grow as a student of Scripture first. Meanwhile, my husband finally left his job to start a business. He barely brought any money home that first year, and our financial pressure increased—we couldn't possibly afford tuition. Sometime later, I finally had a publisher, my husband's business took off, and after much prayer, counsel, and affirmation, I enrolled in classes. Behind the scenes, God was working in every detail. Had I gotten a publisher the first (or second, or third, or fourth) time I tried, I doubt I would have ever considered seminary. If my husband hadn't spent years feeling stuck in an unfulfilling job, he probably wouldn't have taken the leap to start his own business. This was God's plan for us. In perfect wisdom, he ordained every single delay and disappointment for his good purposes. Nothing in our lives is left to chance. We can trust that our suffering, setbacks, and successes are all ordained by God to lead us where he wills and conform us into his image.

And that is just an example! Think about your life. If you begin to follow the threads of your circumstances, you will see story after story of God caring for you, providing for you, and working through you. You'll find that he often works in ways you didn't expect (and probably didn't want). We won't get to see the full picture now. But in heaven, we will learn how our stories were woven through generations and generations. God is intimately

involved with every aspect of our lives, and in perfect wisdom, power, and love he is orchestrating a story written before time began. The more we train our eyes to notice God’s marvelous works, the more our hearts will sing:

Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name;
 make known his deeds among the peoples!
 Sing to him, sing praises to him;
 tell of all his wondrous works!
 Glory in his holy name;
 let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice. . . .
 Remember the wondrous works that he has done,
 his miracles, and the judgments he uttered.
 (Ps. 105:1–3, 5)

The Wonder of His Attributes

Low views of God lead to spiritual despondency, so we must cultivate our wonder by studying his attributes. It is not by the sheer force of will that we stand in awe. When our souls are most hungry and despairing, we must fill our minds with truth too wonderful to comprehend, even though it may not affect us immediately. There is darkness in and outside of us which sometimes clouds God’s greatness—grief, trial, temptation, disaster—so we must keep seeking him in faith. He will reveal his glory again, opening our eyes to see him anew.

To be clear, I do not mean to indicate that we discover anything *new* about him. Rather, we only discover what already *is*. God is eternal and unchanging; “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb. 13:8). He cannot grow in character,

because his immutable attributes are already perfect. He cannot improve in power or wisdom, because he is the source of all power and wisdom. However, since *our* understanding is not perfect, *we* can grow and improve in our knowledge of him.

Consider those times when old truths hit you in new ways. Perhaps you were suddenly overwhelmed by God's love for you in Christ and the mercy of the cross. Or a verse you'd read dozens of times captured your heart afresh. Or a friend reminded you of some biblical principle or promise, and though you'd heard it before, it clicked for the first time. In those times, God hasn't changed—you have.

Because God is infinite, we can always learn more about him; because we are finite, we will never fully grasp him. God is both knowable *and* beyond our understanding. The more we truly know him, the more we realize how limited our understanding really is. Finite minds cannot comprehend the great I am. We have our confessions and creeds, but even as we hold them, we must admit to mystery. As Scripture says, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?'" (Rom. 11:33–34).

One of my kitchen cabinets stores an array of mismatched containers and lids. When putting leftover food away, this often leads to the frustrating attempt to secure a lid on a container that just won't fit. After fastening the first three corners in place, I can't manage to get the fourth one secure without making another corner pop back up. No matter how hard I try, the lid won't close. In some sense, this is how it feels when we try to wrap our minds

around difficult doctrines—God simply refuses to fit into a box. Though the Spirit gives us discernment to turn from false teaching and grow in our understanding of him, the “right” doctrines are never as manageable as we’d like. The incarnation—essential to Christian belief—is as certain as it is unfathomable. How could Jesus be both fully God and fully man and not sacrifice any element of either? We *believe* it is true, but we don’t *understand* how it works. Our limits are also obvious when we try to understand the Trinity, or the eternity of God, or the sovereignty of God in a world full of evil. We can and should grow in our understanding of each of these doctrines, and yet we will never fully comprehend any of them.

These limits shouldn’t make us throw up our hands in frustration. A God who could be fully understood by finite minds would be so small! Our limits should humble us before the Almighty and help us hold fast to the truth that he has revealed about himself in Scripture (for there is no greater pride than dismissing who God says he is and inserting our own opinions of who he should be).

When we accept the tension of knowing and believing without fully understanding, our hearts are moved in wonder. Just think: God’s glory is so vast that no man could see him and live, and yet he made a way for us to spend eternity with him. He is so powerful that he spoke the universe into existence, and yet he’s so personal that he knows every hair on our heads. He is the sum of all wisdom and righteousness and goodness and truth and justice, the one to whom the angels cry, “Holy, holy, holy” (Isa. 6:3). Theology—the study of God—should never grow stale, for “he is the inexhaustible fountain of all being, all life, all intelligence, all wisdom, all power, all good, and all true happiness in the universe.”³

Forever and Ever

Even if I were to spend my whole life living in the Swiss Alps, I would never see the entirety of its beauty. And yet these mountains—majestic as they are—are limited. God has determined their peaks and set their boundaries in a specific place, in a country, in a world, in a universe that he holds in the palm of his hand. If something so small can overwhelm us with wonder, how much more can the Maker of heaven and earth when we seek him!

Eternally existing, infinitely worthy, and incomprehensibly great, God’s glory is so vast that the whole world cannot contain it. Even eternity won’t exhaust our worship. But the more we behold now, the more we can echo with creation the praise due his holy name.

The heavens declare Thy glory, Lord,
 In every star Thy wisdom shines;
 But when our eyes behold Thy Word,
 We read Thy name in fairer lines.⁴

Discussion Questions

1. Read Colossians 3:1–2. What practical steps can you take to “set your mind on things that are above?” In what ways is your heart lulled by earthly distraction, and how can you minimize those distractions?
2. Read Psalm 145:3–12. What does this passage say about God? How does it call us to respond? Consider verse 5. What can help us meditate on God’s glorious splendor and wondrous works?

3. Describe a time that you felt especially aware of God's magnificence. What stirred that awareness?
4. Read Isaiah 46:9–10. How does the truth of God's sovereignty over your life comfort you?
5. Follow the threads of your circumstances—where have you seen God's providential hands at work?
6. Consider the attributes of God such as his omniscience, self-sufficiency, immutability, wisdom, faithfulness, justice, mercy, love, and holiness. Which of his attributes most move your heart to worship? Which of his attributes do you most struggle to comprehend?

Recommended Reading

A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy* (New York: Harper Collins, 1978).

Jen Wilkin, *None Like Him: 10 Ways God Is Different from Us (and Why That's a Good Thing)* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016).